

## Book reviews

**Clinics in Rheumatic Diseases, Volume 3, No. 2. Immunogenetics and Rheumatic Disease.** Edited by D. S. B. Inglis (Guest Editor: D. Brewerton), 1977. 381 pp, 42 tables, 12 figs. Saunders, Eastbourne (Price £8.25).

The discovery that some human leucocyte antigens (HLA) act as genetic markers for a number of rheumatic disorders has been described as perhaps the most significant advance in medicine during the last 25 years. Further study has shown that a wide range of diseases spanning almost the whole of medicine has been found to be involved in varying degrees with the HLA system. Despite the fact that knowledge of the association between immunogenetics and rheumatic disease is only five years old, information is accumulating rapidly and as the editor of this book (himself one of the team which made the first observations associating ankylosing spondylitis with HLA B27) states in his forward—'leading authorities have asked to review existing knowledge of the subject and to dwell on the many current problems and uncertainties'. This they have done in a widely ranging, detailed, and readable series of articles which manage to be as up to date as is possible in a book.

Excellent accounts are given of the major histocompatibility complex in man, immune responsiveness, and the relationship between rheumatic disease and the major histocompatibility complex. Although these sections will include much that is new to the average clinician they repay careful study.

Perhaps of most interest to the venereologist will be those sections dealing with ankylosing spondylitis, uveitis, Reiter's disease, and psoriatic arthropathy. In the section on ankylosing spondylitis intriguing information is given about the surprising findings obtained using HLA B27 detection as an 'epidemiological tool' in asymptomatic randomly selected populations. These preliminary findings showed a 20-30% prevalence of sacroiliitis and/or spondylitis which was equally apparent in both sexes. Previous studies had suggested prevalence figures of only 1-2% with a heavy male preponderance. A good account of the potential mechanisms of the association of B27 and spondylitis is given.

The section dealing with reactive arthritis, Reiter's disease, and psoriatic

arthropathy attempts to delineate the overlapping relationships between these conditions and reviews much interesting recent work. The distinction between 'reactive arthritis' and Reiter's disease is one which the experienced venereologist will find hard to understand (a point the authors accept). Study of the HLA systems and their association with these disorders has so far further established their inter-relationship but has done little to clarify it.

The problem of anterior uveitis, its clinical associations, epidemiology, immunology and investigation are well reviewed and there is a particularly useful bibliography.

In short, a valuable and readable book although perhaps rather expensive.

*J. K. Oates*

**Gonorrhoea. Volume 9, Major Problems in Dermatology Series.** R. S. Morton (Series Editor: A. Rook), 1977. Pp. 292, 24 tables, 56 figs. Saunders, Eastbourne (£12.00).

This beautifully produced monograph is the first comprehensive work on gonorrhoea to appear for many years. It thus bids to become a definitive reference on the subject, and in this role there can be no doubt of its success. It has been compiled with great thoroughness and accuracy, and the practical skill and long experience of the author are at all times apparent in the text. The historical chapter is the most detailed I have read, and provides a salutary reminder of the simplicity and potential effectiveness of treatment today. Laboratory aspects are condensed with expertise into a synopsis which embraces all, or almost all, important research work, most of which has appeared relatively recently. Unfortunately, local immunity receives only a single reference and one five-line paragraph (p. 52), which reflects neither the importance of the subject nor the amount of published work. Detailed histopathological descriptions appear in the chapters on gonorrhoea in both men and women, but without any attribution to the source. If it is Harkness, then the origin of much of his information is open to criticism on the grounds that it was not obtained from normal healthy young adults. The omission of an electron-micrograph of the gonococcus *in vivo* is unfortunate in the light of recent demon-

stration of morphological variation between this and the laboratory form by Novotny and others.

A few minor points also merit comment in an ambitious volume such as this. Perimetritis is surely more common in gonorrhoea than in NSU, rather than the reverse (p. 77). The description of the formation of cervical erosion (p. 106) is not in accord with currently accepted observations that stratified squamous epithelium is not actually replaced by columnar epithelium, but rather that the latter is exposed by hyperplasia and ectropion. In the chapter on prepubertal gonorrhoea, ophthalmia is illustrated by three pictures of chlamydial infection, two of which are colpophotographs, without real justification. Many would disagree that the urine test is normal within 72 hours of treatment of gonorrhoea in men (p. 149). The association between semen swallowing and hepatitis B antigen in the blood was subsequently shown to be false by the group who originally proposed it (p. 159). Transfer of infection by anorectal contact defies my imagination (also p. 159).

Dr Morton is again at his best in the chapter on control of gonorrhoea: the section on aims and methods is a masterpiece of condensation that could serve to guide everyone concerned with contact tracing. Both he and his contact tracing service are to be congratulated on examining no less than 78% of female contacts sought in 1976 (p. 247), a figure only dreamed of in London. This, and the monograph on gonorrhoea, bear witness to a distinguished career.

*B. Evans*

**Nongonococcal Urethritis and Related Infections.** Edited by D. Hobson and K. K. Holmes, 1977. Pp. 391. American Society for Microbiology, Washington DC (\$14.00).

Although it is not clear from the title, this is a report of the proceedings of a symposium held in the USA in April 1976. The first feature that strikes the reader is the large number of contributors and participants from the USA and Europe, and the variety of disciplines represented including genitourinary physicians, ophthalmologists, epidemiologists, pediatricians, veterinarians, and micro-biologists.